Many teachers commonly use assessment as the starting point of their teaching activities because they believe that assessment drives learning and teaching activities. Hence students tend to organise their learning activities around these prescribed assessment tasks.

These beliefs and practices have the potential to detract from promoting effective, efficient, and engaging learning. Teachers, in using assessment tasks to orchestrate their teaching activities send out a message to their learners which minimises the importance of the learning experience. Not only does this constrain learners from taking full advantage of the designed learning experience, but with an explicit focus on assessment tasks by teachers, learners tend to adopt coping mechanisms that focus on the assessment task itself, and little else.

This approach to teaching leads learners to adopt a surface approach to their learning activities, when a deeper approach is recognised as the more desirable thing to do. Learners are not intrinsically deep or surface processors (Laurillard, 1979). Their approach to learning is dependent upon the teaching strategies and assessment tasks that teachers employ. If the teaching strategies and assessment tasks do not require students to engage deeply with the subject matter or the learning activities, chances are they will skip it or gloss over it. Teaching strategies and assessment tasks can influence what parts of the course content gets studied and how it gets studied (Kirkwood & Price, 2008).

In a model of teaching where assessment drives learning, students tend to pay little attention to teaching activities such as lectures, tutorials, and group discussions. They tend to cruise along throughout the term only to ramp up their effort and momentum close to assessment due dates.

A more effective and efficient approach to teaching would be to focus greater attention
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